

Appl. No. 10/090,896
Reply to Office Action of December 16, 2003

REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the final Office Action mailed December 16, 2003. Claims 1 to 6, 8 to 27 and 30 to 64 are now pending in this case. Claim 7 was cancelled previously. Claims 28 and 29 are canceled herein. Claims 1, 13, 14 and 20 are being amended herein. No new matter has been added in the amendments. Please charge Deposit Account No. 02-1818 to pay for the Two Month Extension of Time and the Request for Continued Examination, which is being filed herewith.

Applicant submitted an Information Disclosure Statement ("IDS") on December 9, 2003, prior to the mailing date of this final Office Action. In a telephone call, the Examiner confirmed receipt of the IDS. Applicant respectfully requests that receipt of the IDS and consideration of the references disclosed therein be confirmed in the file.

In the present Office Action, Claims 1 to 6 and 8 to 64 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious in view of French Reference Fr 2 805 662 to Bourroux ("Bourroux") and U.S. Patent No. 5,831,814 to Hamill ("Hamill").

Claim 13 has been amended merely to claim a proper dependency from Claim 1. The amendment is non-narrowing and disclaims no subject matter.

Claims 1 and 14 have been amended to reflect that the fuse element is visible to a person viewing the claimed fuse block. *Bourroux* does not teach such a feature and indeed teaches away from that feature as seen in its Figs. 1 and 3, where element 7 is inserted into piece 3 and body 15 and is therefore not visible. *Hamill* does not cure the deficiencies of *Bourroux* with respect to the new feature of Claims 1 and 14 as its purpose is to show three projections 38 in Fig. 4 as noted at page 2 of the Office Action.

In the telephone discussion noted above, Applicant's representative discussed the viewable feature with the Examiner. The Examiner recognized that *Bourroux* did not teach such a feature. The Examiner inquired, however, whether the protective member 102 as seen in Figs. 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13 of the present invention would enable a person to view the fuse element and its connection to multiple terminals. Applicant points Examiner to the following quotation at page 13, line 1 of the original specification:

The protective member 102 in an embodiment is a thin plastic piece of material. The protective member 102 may be made of any suitable material, however, in a preferred embodiment the protective member 102 is clear, translucent or transparent. The protective member 102 enables an operator to view the fuse

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element 80 from above or outside the fuse block 100. The protective member 102 also precludes the operator from contacting or damaging the fuse elements when inserting a replacement fuse 26 into two of the terminals 50a.

The above-quoted passage sets forth that in one preferred embodiment, fuse element 80 is exposed above block 100 and provided under a clear, translucent or transparent cover purposefully for operator viewing. For at least that reason, Claims 1 and 14 are structurally and functionally different than the teachings of *Bourroux* and *Hamill*, alone or in combination. Those Claims as well as Claims 2 to 6, 7 to 13 and 15 to 19 that depend respectively from Claims 1 and 14 are therefore respectfully asserted to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 20 has also been amended and is directed to a fuse block that includes a body and first, second and third sets of terminals positioned in the body, wherein one of the terminals from the first set is electrically connected to one of the terminals of the second and third sets by at least two fuse elements. Claim 20 as amended embodies the alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 11, wherein a single terminal 150 is connected electrically via two different fuse elements 80 to two separate terminals, such as terminal 50a. There is absolutely no suggestion in the figures of *Bourroux* to modify the configuration shown in Fig. 1, so that a single one of the terminals 9 or 12 can be connected electrically to two other different terminals via two fuse elements. *Hamill* does not cure the deficiencies of *Bourroux* with respect to Claim 20 as presently presented. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 20 and Claims 21 to 27 that depend from Claim 20 are each novel, nonobvious and patentably distinct over *Bourroux* and *Hamill*, alone or in combination.

Claim 30 presented previously is directed to a junction box having a fuse block comprising a body and a plurality of terminals fixed to and extending from at least one side of the body. At least one of the terminals has a first integral portion that contacts a fuse element, a second integral portion that receives a terminal from a replacement fuse, a third integral portion connected to a first adjacent terminal and a fourth integral portion connected to a second adjacent terminal. Claim 30 highlights certain distinctions of the present invention over the prior art, for instance, that the claimed terminal has a portion configured to connect to a fuse element and also is integrally connected to two other terminals. The references do not show that combination alone or in combination.

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The combination of references does not show integrally bussed terminals, wherein at least one of the terminals is connected to a fuse element instead of a replacement fuse. *Hamill* is cited to show two fuse terminals that are formed integrally. It is apparent upon reviewing *Hamill*, however, that the *Hamill* configuration would not work with the configuration of *Bourroux*, which as shown clearly in Fig. 1, requires that inline terminals 9 and 12 be separate and not integral, so that the separate terminals 9 and 12 can be connected electrically by fuse element 7. The references of *Bourroux* and *Hamill* would destroy one another if one of skill in the art were to attempt to combine the two references. That is, terminals 9 and 12 of *Bourroux* could be integrally bussed in-line to one terminal as seen in Fig. 4 of *Hamill* but not to two terminals.

The separate wire slots 40 of Figs. 3 and 4 of *Hamill* are not helpful to teach Claim 30 because those slots are not disclosed to hold or support fuse elements as called for by the present invention. There is no suggestion in *Hamill* or *Bourroux* to use the slots 40 for fusing. In *Bourroux* moreover there is no suggestion to integrally connect three adjacent terminals. No combination of the *Hamill* and *Bourroux* makes out a *prima facie* case for obviousness. For Claim 30, the Office Action only states that *Bourroux* shows a replacement fuse. The Office Action does not address the rest of the limitations in Claim 30. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that Claim 30 and Claims 31 to 45 that depend from Claim 30 are each in condition for allowance.

Referring now to Claim 46, a terminal for a fuse block is provided. The terminal includes a first portion that extends from the fuse block and contacts a fuse element. A second portion extends from the fuse block and receives a terminal of a replacement fuse. A third integral portion is provided that is connected to a first adjacent terminal. A fourth integral portion is provided that is connected to a second adjacent terminal. Claim 46 is distinguished over *Bourroux* because *Bourroux* does not teach a terminal having one portion that connects to a fuse element, another portion that connects to a terminal of a replacement fuse, a further portion connected integrally to a first adjacent terminal and a yet another portion connected integrally to a second adjacent terminal.

Hamill does not cure the deficiencies of *Bourroux* with respect to Claim 46. *Hamill* for instance does not show a first portion that extends from the fuse block and contacts a fuse element. Also, *Hamill* does not show a first portion that extends from the fuse block to contact a

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fuse element and a second portion that extends from the fuse block to receive a terminal of a replacement fuse. No combination of the *Hamill* and *Bourroux* provides a *prima facie* case for obviousness for Claim 46.

For Claim 46, the Office Action only states that *Bourroux* shows a fuse block with a plurality of fuse elements connected to the terminals. That finding does not address the claimed features recited above. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that Claim 46 and Claims 47 to 56 that depend from Claim 46 are each in condition for allowance.

Claim 57 is directed to a fuse protection method. Claim 57 includes the steps of providing a body, a plurality of terminals affixed to and extending from at least one side of the body, wherein at least three terminals are formed integrally. The method includes causing a fuse element to contact at least two non-integral terminals. Also, the method includes providing a location on the terminals for receiving a terminal of a replacement fuse. It should be appreciated from the foregoing discussion, that *Bourroux* and *Hamill*, alone or in combination, do not teach the elements of Claim 57 as amended.

The Office Action states that figures 1 and 2 of *Bourroux* teach the above method. *Bourroux* does not teach such method. *Bourroux* does not teach forming at least three terminals integrally. *Hamill* in turn does not teach causing a fuse element to contact at least two non-integral terminals. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 57 as well as Claims 58 to 62 that depend from Claim 57 are each patentable at this time.

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of the Claim 63 in view of *Bourroux*. Claim 63 highlights an advantage of the present invention, namely, that only the power wires have to be fed remotely to a localized fuse box, wherein shorter load wires are then provided from the localized fuse box to the localized loads. Applicant does not agree that figures 1 and 2 of *Bourroux* make such a claimed method clear as stated in the Office Action. It is only with hindsight and the disclosure of the present invention that such a feature may be clear upon viewing *Bourroux*. It is respectfully submitted that such hindsight reconstruction in view of the presently claimed invention is not proper. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 63 and Claim 64 that depends from Claim 63 are each novel, nonobvious and patentably distinct over *Bourroux* and *Hamill*.

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For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of his patent application and earnestly solicits an early allowance of same.

Respectfully submitted,

BELL, BOYD & LLOYD LLC

BY Robert W. Connors
Robert W. Connors
Reg. No. 46,639
P.O. Box 1135
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1135
Phone: (312) 807-4214

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